



The independence movement of Bangladesh

Here we publish an article written by Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad on the Liberation Movement of Bangladesh. He was a legendary Bengali politician, journalist and communist activist, popularly known as "Kakababu".

MUZAFFAR AHMAD

DURING the latter half of the last [19th] century, when the poet Nabinchandra Sen was a student of Presidency College, the boys from West Bengal used to poke fun at him by calling him a 'Banga.' Even in 1913, when I came to study in Kolkata, the boys from West Bengal called us 'Banga.' But this was not like Nabinchandra's time. Some people used to say of us: "They have come from Bongodesh." This was a way of calling us 'Banga' in a more polite language. It is true that once a part of East Bengal used to be called Bangal Nagar or Bangal Desh. And today that country has in reality taken the shape of a sovereign country called the People's Republic of Bangladesh. Even more surprising is the fact that every person in West Bengal wholeheartedly supported or actively participated in the creation of this independent country.

The other day a friend was talking about how a group of pensioners had once joked that they have now become western Bengalis.

1947 saw the partition of India and a part of it became Pakistan. And this

Pakistan was further divided into two parts -- East Pakistan and West Pakistan. Muslim League's rule was established and Khwaja Nazimuddin became the prime minister of East Pakistan. Thus started from the very beginning the oppression at the hands of volunteers called 'Ansar' and the Muslim League rule. Be it for this oppression or for psychological reasons, thousands of Hindu people migrated to West Bengal. In no way can the rule of Muslim League be called a good rule. The students and the youth started protesting. In the forefront were student leaders such as Shamsul Haque, Tassadduk [Hossain], [Mohammad] Toaha. They had meetings in Dhaka in which Sheikh Mujibur Rahman participated. He was possibly a student of Abul Kashem and had come to represent the Jubo League. When Pakistan's Governor General declared in Dhaka University that only Urdu was to be the state language of Pakistan, a storm of protests came from the students. They let Mr. Jinnah know to his face that Bangla had to be given the status of state language as well. In their fight for the language, they even had to give their lives.

Today, I am remembering the martyrs



Comrade Muzaffar Ahmad (August 5, 1889 – December 18, 1973)

of the language movement of 1952. Due to their sacrifices, Bangla was given a place as a state language alongside Urdu.

In East Pakistan, Moulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani headed the anti-Muslim League movement. His activism led to the formation of the Awami League. He was the Founding

President of this party. Student leader Shamsul Haque was the first general secretary. It was to Shamsul Haque that Muslim League first lost an assembly seat in Tangail. Unfortunately, he is no longer alive. Many might mistake him for the present minister Shamsul Haque.

Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy had no role in the formation of this league. After being exiled from East Pakistan, he went to Lahore and established the Jinnah Awami Muslim League. When the order of exile was removed, he came back and joined this Awami Muslim League. After some time, the Muslim part was removed from the name and it became Awami League. Communists had a contribution to the movement of this league. The seven people who had to lay down their lives at Rajshahi Central Jail were communists too. Communist student leader Foni died in jail. When the Awami League led by Mr. Suhrawardy did not agree to take a stand against imperialism, Moulana Bhashani left the Awami League and established the National Awami Party. I kept track of all this while being outside of East Pakistan (I am a citizen of India). Of course, we communists were spending days in jail during this time under India's Congress government.

I am saying this to lay bare the correct facts. I have tried to present the accurate facts in this little book. If any information is found to be faulty, it will be corrected in subsequent editions. I am for the upholding of the correct fact at all times as some university student may be gathering knowledge from this book after many years.

I have been living in Kolkata for the last 59 years. A strong connection has grown between me and this city. But I think of Bangladesh too. The struggle of the people of Bangladesh to escape from the torture of West Pakistan is seldom matched in history. I feel proud of myself and of the Bangladeshi fighters. I am a powerless old man. If I had the strength, I too would have joined the Bangladeshi Mukti Foj.

I salute those who are the leaders of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I do not care if their views are not the same as mine. I believe in my heart that one day Bangladesh will turn into an ideal country on the world map.

Translated by Moyukh Mahtab of The Daily Star. Source : Behat Biplob, edited by Salimullah Khan, published by Agamee Prokashoni, 2009.

MOURNING SUMAYA

Mourning the violence of capital(ism)

THE SOUND & THE FURY



SUSHMITA S. PREETHA

ON March 21, 2014, I received the news that Sumaya Khatun, my friend and comrade, a 16-year-old girl who used to work at Tazreen Garments, passed away after battling a cancerous tumour for over a year. The last time I saw her, the night before my flight to Toronto, she was in the hospital; she had refused to let go of

my hand. "Don't go," she had implored. "What if I die before you come back?" she had asked, sulking. I wanted to stay longer, but I had a farewell party to attend (bourgeois life, after all, must go on), so I promised her I'd be back before she knew it, and that I'd bring with me all the chocolates in the world (she was a big fan of sweet things).

Now she's gone. I think about Sumaya often, the immeasurable pain she endured during her short lifetime, and of her mother, who, for 14 months, had spent every waking moment of her life looking after her dying daughter (but despite all the cruelty of capitalism, always with a smile), and of my activist friends, disoriented and exhausted, who had done everything in their power to save Sumaya from becoming yet another statistic to add to the death toll of Tazreen. Every time I think of her, I am reminded of a powerful short story by Ursula K. Le Guin called *The One who walked away from Omelas*, where the happiness, success and prosperity of the inhabitants of a utopian city, Omelas, depends on their ignoring and forgetting the perpetual torture and humiliation of a child locked in a broom closet. As I think about Tazreen, the child in the broom closet becomes Sumaya, and we, the citizens of Omelas. She must die (/suffer), so I can live. She is my liberation, my happiness. What does it mean, then, for me to mourn her death, to be in solidarity with her?

In *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable*, Judith Butler argues that frames of recognisability mediate how we come to understand some lives as more meaningful and mournable than others.

These frames -- which are always shifting -- determine how we recognise us as subjects (as "I") and acknowledge our relations to Others in the world, not all of whom we consider to be "subjects" in the same way, or at least to the same degree. That is why we mourn for some lives but respond with coldness to the loss of others. Mourning, here, is not an innocent or innate act, but one that is highly regulated by regimes of power.

exist within and reproduce the formal as well as informal spaces of capitalist appropriation of value. However, just because the lives of "unskilled" women workers in global manufacturing factories are productive for capital does not signify that all life is equally valorised and valorisable. After all, as nameless, faceless, expendable labour, the female workers are already always on the path of eventual demise, so what does it matter if their deaths are accelerated by factory accidents? They

the disposability of her life; the 'cheapness' of her life allows the capitalist to violate even the most basic of safety codes to minimise production costs and increase profit. What else but such a conception of disposability can explain why factory managers methodically lock the doors of the factories when fires break out? Or why nine-storey buildings are constructed with no foundation or fire escapes, or why workers are forced to go work in a building that has a crack and has been asked to evacuate, as in the case of Rana Plaza? Death, if I may be permitted to state the obvious, is built into the system(s) of capitalist expansion and exploitation.

Karl Marx had long argued that a surplus labouring population, independent of the limits of the actual increase of population, is both a product and a precondition of capital accumulation. It is the expansion and contraction of the surplus population, he further stated, that determines the rate of wages, the redundancy in workers ensuring that the real wages don't rise to such an extent that it threatens accumulation. Now, it is no longer just the labour of this reserve army that is "surplus" but their lives as well, providing the impetus for capitalist appropriation and accumulation.

An ethical politics of mourning must begin with a critical acknowledgment of the ways in which both "I" and "they" are constituted and positioned differently through capitalist relations. What makes the lives of the garment workers disposable and how am I implicated in its (re)production? What does it mean for me to mourn her death when she dies so I may live a good life? Simple "acknowledgement" of privilege and complicity means little beyond liberal empathy if we cannot commit to changing the existing regimes of power and relinquish the privilege that come with it. Real mourning, one that respects the departed at least, can only take place once we acknowledge how we are complicit in the murders that took place in Rana Plaza or Tazreen and work towards a world where my happiness does not lie in the inevitable collapse or burning of a nine-storey building, in the death of Sumaya.

The writer is an activist and journalist.

They are replaceable, interchangeable and disposable figures in capitalist logic, whose very expendability makes them the most valuable kind of worker. The question, then, becomes: how does one grieve that which is already disposable? Or rather, what exactly is grieved when such loss does occur?



Sumaya Khatun (1998-2014)

PHOTO: ATISH SAHA

For Butler, an ungrievable life is one that cannot be mourned because "it has never lived, that is, it has never counted as life in the first place." In the context of garment workers in Bangladesh, however, the argument is complicated by the notion that the workers are not invisible as such, but are integral to the national imagination as the bearers of the country's progress and economic growth. Collectively, these workers -- not just their labour but their *lives* -- are valuable because they

are replaceable, inter-changeable and disposable figures in capitalist logic, whose very expendability makes them the most valuable kind of worker. The question, then, becomes: how does one grieve that which is already disposable? Or rather, what exactly is grieved when such loss does occur?

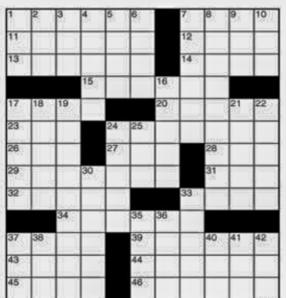
Deemed worth \$1,250 by Bangladesh's labour laws, the worker produces value for the capitalist not only through her labour power, but through

CROSSWORD by Thomas Joseph

- ACROSS**
- Walk, in slang
 - Jazz style
 - Ask
 - Went fast
 - Less civil
 - In the past
 - Comedy club offering
 - Swiss peaks
 - Sprightly
 - Golf goal
 - More frequent
 - In the past
 - Spelling contest
 - Sedan or SUV
 - Arts section pieces
 - Time for planning
 - Prunes
 - Previously owned
 - "Taken" star
 - Print unit
 - Pinball palace
 - Midmonth day
 - China collection
 - Prone to prying
 - Sevilla's nation
- DOWN**
- That fellow
 - Wallet bill
 - Future embryos
 - The end
 - Gossip bit
 - Maryland player, for short
 - Patsy
 - Wins over
 - Compass trace
 - Casual shirt
 - Assesses
 - Brewery product
 - Quebec and Ontario
 - Head out
 - Goofed
 - Past plump
 - Handful of
 - "Nashville" song
 - Open, as a pill bottle
 - Surfeit
 - Refinery rocks
 - Seamstress's aid
 - Swearing-in words
 - Simile center
 - Cozy retreat
 - Seventh Greek letter

Yesterday's answer

JONAH PARIS
OBAMA ALIST
KEVIN SPACEY
EYE GEEK HEX
QUARK
GOTUP SITAR
AREA WAGE
LEASH MIXED
HYPES
TWO EAT TSA
ROBIN WRIGHT
AROMA IDIOM
PEEPS CAFES



CRYPTOQUOTE

NLPHUV HA ULE TXAE NLLZHUV YE OYBG LEGOC, HE'A NLLZHUV HU EGO AYRO MHCBEHLU.
-- YUELUHUO MO AYHUE - OSXFOCD

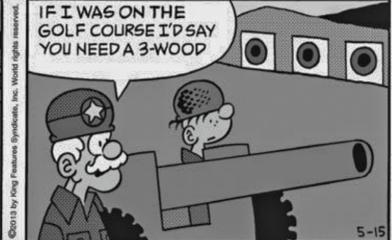
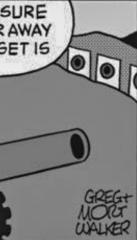
Saturday's Cryptoquote: I PUT MY HEART AND MY SOUL INTO MY WORK, AND HAVE LOST MY MIND IN THE PROCESS.
-- VINCENT VAN GOGH

A XYDLBAXR IS LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

BEETLE BAILEY

by Mort Walker



HENRY

by Don Trachte



"You forget what you want to remember, and you remember what you want to forget."

Cormac McCarthy